

## THE MIHRAB IN THE CAVE OF THE DOME OF THE ROCK

Beneath the Qubbat al-Sakhra, in the southern wall of the cavern in the rock, is embedded what Creswell believed to be the "earliest extant mihrab in Islam" (plate 1), contemporary with the Dome of the Rock and ascribed to its founder, 'Abd al-Malik. Creswell presents two arguments for presuming a late-seventh-century date: one is the "curious line ornament" carved on the face of the arch and the rectangular frame which "recalls the decoration on a milestone of 'Abd al-Malik" now in the Louvre; the other is the shahada inscribed across the base of the arch in "archaic Kufic characters" combined with the "equally archaic inscription" outside the molding that frames the mihrab.<sup>1</sup> When Creswell wrote these remarks, major parts of the inscription were barely visible under a coat of plaster. When they were uncovered in the course of the restoration work that was completed in 1964, they were in such a poor state of preservation<sup>2</sup> that deciphering them has so far proved impossible.

Creswell's view that the mihrab is probably of early Umayyad origin was accepted by Klaus Brisch who, in his comments published in 1973 in the *Propyläen Kunstgeschichte*,<sup>3</sup> compared the cresting at the top of the mihrab with the type of crenellation common in later Umayyad architecture. He cited a well-known dirhem of 'Abd al-Malik,<sup>4</sup> which depicts the earliest extant visual representation of a mihrab and was believed by Brisch to be a "*würdige Parallele*," once the Umayyad date of the mihrab was fully established.

The view that the flat carving of the mihrab niche perfectly agrees with its early date and, as suggested by Creswell, precedes the more common concave shape first introduced by al-Walid I in the mosques of Medina and Damascus, is also shared by Géza Fehérvári, who sees the mihrab in the cave of the Dome of the Rock as the earliest extant example of an Islamic prayer niche.<sup>5</sup> Here I will challenge this view by showing the mihrab

in a different artistic and historic light and suggesting it is probably of later date.

The mihrab is carved from white marble and measures 1.30 m by 0.83 m,<sup>6</sup> including its outer inscribed border, which in Creswell's time was hardly visible. Its pointed arch rests upon two approximately semicircular lobes, giving it a somewhat unusual trefoil-arch form. Beneath these lobes the archivolt descends vertically, extends as an architrave, and continues to form a rectangular frame. This continuity of archivolt, architrave, and frame is emphasized by a continuous scroll. The ornament is not very carefully drawn, but it clearly consists of fleshy half-palmettes connected by a winding stem that is formed by elongating one of the palmette petals. With the exception of two bosses—one in each of the lower lobes—the interior of the arch is plain, but the spandrels are filled with bosses, arrowheads, and teardrops. The upper structure is surmounted by a projecting band of pearls and crenellations and rests on a pair of attached colonnettes with nearly bell-shaped capitals. A lintel-like tie beam with the shahada engraved on its face separates the arch from the intercolumnar space. The latter is again undecorated except for a black disk with a large rosette inserted in its upper center.<sup>7</sup> The attached colonnettes are flanked by a row of alternating rosettes and lozenges.

The prayer niche as a whole has no known parallels either in extant mihrabs or in architectural decoration,<sup>8</sup> but it does display ornamentation for which sufficient examples can be found elsewhere to suggest an approximate date and provenance. The first unusual feature of the mihrab to strike the eye is the form of its arch. Its pointed and stilted upper section is much too large for the pair of lobes on which it rests. The effect is a disproportion further emphasized by the vertical extension of the archivolt. One will look in vain for any



Plate 1. Jerusalem. Mihrab in the Cave of the Dome of the Rock. (Photo: D. Golan; courtesy L. A. Mayer Memorial.)

parallel to this odd arch in the architectural decoration contemporary with the Dome of the Rock or even before it. The earliest extant examples so far found date from the second half of the ninth century and come from Mesopotamia or, in one case, from Egypt.

The first of these early examples is a small stone slab with the design of a mihrab which Herzfeld found in an antechamber of the Jami' al-'Umariyya in Mosul (plate 2).<sup>9</sup> In contrast with the mihrab in the Dome of the

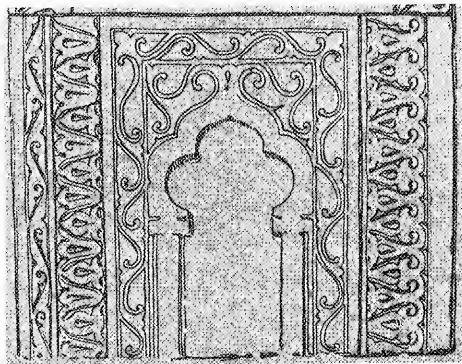


Plate 2. Mosul. Mihrab from the Jami' al-'Umariyya. From F. Sarre and E. Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise im Euphrat und Tigris Gebiet*.

Rock, the upper pointed and the two approximately semicircular lobes of its arch form a well-balanced trefoil. Other unfortunately less well preserved and therefore more ambiguous examples occur in the curtain wall of the Qasr al-'Ashiq at Samarra and the Baghdad Gate at Raqqa.<sup>10</sup> An Egyptian tombstone with the design of an arched head in the form of a central keel-like arch and two hemispherical loops, which was erected for a certain Bashir ibn 'Isa al-Khawlanî in 245 (860) (plate 3),<sup>11</sup> seems to suggest that in mid-ninth-century Egypt this form of arch was not yet common. The closest parallel we have can be seen on two panels on the inner flanks of the towers of the Bab Zuwayla in Cairo (plate 4), which date from 485 (1092),<sup>12</sup> each composed of a pointed arch that springs on either side from a small semicircular arch standing on a quarter-circle corbel. These blind niches are almost certainly later than the Jerusalem mihrab, but their resemblance to it may not be accidental.

The flat surfaces of archivolt and framing border bear a carved scroll design which Creswell defined as a

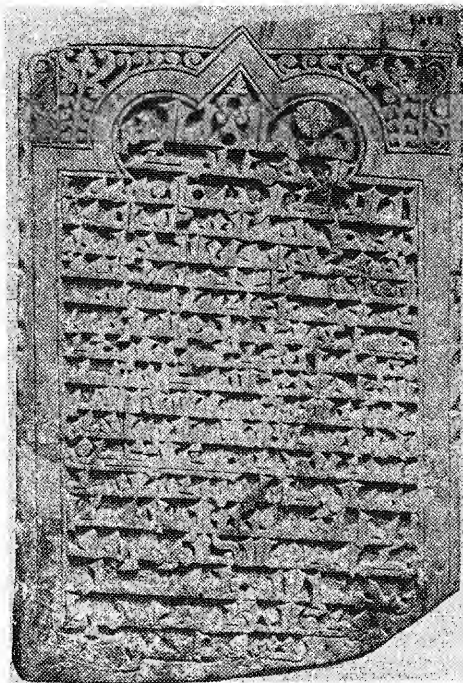


Plate 3. Egyptian tombstone, dated 245 (860). From Gaston Wiet, *Stèles funéraires*.



Plate 4. Cairo. Bab al-Zuwayla. Blind arch. (Photo: E. Baer.)

“curious line ornament” and compared with the decoration on a milestone from the time of ‘Abd al-Malik (plate 5).<sup>13</sup> On the mihrab, however, the orna-

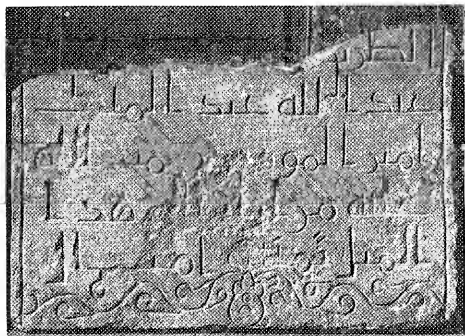


Plate 5. Milestone of ‘Abd al-Malik. From K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*.

ment is conceived as an undulating stem which is formed of half-palmettes, only two of whose petals curve out; the third is extended to form the stalk. Although the drawing is clumsy and the spacing not correctly calculated, the artist clearly intended to adapt the design from the top of the pointed arch to the rectangular corners of the frame where the scrolls were to meet. On the milestone, in contrast, the scrolls are drawn in the classical fashion: a single undulating line from which hooks sprout at regular intervals. They resemble the scrolls on the archivolts of one of the eighth-century wooden panels from the Aqsa Mosque (plate 6)<sup>14</sup> rather than those on the mihrab; the latter are much closer to the arabesque and stylistically are more sophisticated. They are reminiscent of the stucco frieze that runs around some of the arched openings above the piers in the mosque of Ibn Tulun.<sup>15</sup> Even closer parallels to the Jerusalem scrolls are found on Egyptian tombstones; examples are a stone erected for Ja‘fara bint Ahmad b. Ibrahim al-Hawtaki dated 245 (859-60), and another in the name of Lumh dated 248 (862).<sup>16</sup>

It could be argued that the scroll ornament on the Jerusalem mihrab is too common and too conservative a design to be used as a stylistic indicator for dating a monument. But no such objection can possibly be made with regard to the bosses, teardrops, and arrowheads that decorate the spandrels. These motifs are rare in



Plate 6. Jerusalem. Aqsa Mosque. Wooden panel (E9). (Photo: E. Baer.)

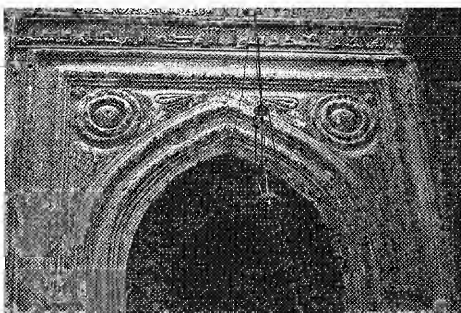


Plate 7. Cairo. Mosque of Ibn Tulun. Original mihrab. Upper section. (Photo: E. Baer.)

Islamic architecture and architectural decoration: with the possible exception of a so-far unpublished, undated, and extremely primitive mihrab design in the city wall of Diyarbakr, which has bosses in its spandrels similar to those on the Jerusalem mihrab, we have found only one example that closely resembles our monument. It is the upper part of the stucco mihrab in the qibla wall of the mosque of Ibn Tulun (plate 7) which it is generally agreed is contemporary with the foundation of the mosque.<sup>17</sup> Not only are its spandrels decorated with great raised bosses (which incidentally were erroneously regarded by Creswell as the earliest existing examples of this treatment), but the Cairene artist also made use

of large teardrops to fill the triangular space at either side of the arch. Another striking parallel to the Jerusalem mihrab is found in the small button-like bosses which in both instances fill the upper corners of the rectangular frame. In the Dome of the Rock mihrab, this motif is repeated in the lower corners of the frame; in the Cairo mihrab the rectangular space has a molded border which makes the space too narrow to allow for ornamentation.

It seems unlikely that the similarities between the Jerusalem and the Cairo mihrab are merely coincidental, and therefore they suggest a Tulunid *terminus post quem* for our mihrab as well. The stylistic parallels have bearing on more than its date, however; they connect the Dome of the Rock mihrab with a decoration which, in Egypt at least, can be traced back to a local pre-Islamic tradition: the use of bosses and concentric rings to fill spandrels and pediments, or even as a major design motif. It is common on sixth- and seventh-century Coptic tombstones with architectural decorations (plate 8).<sup>18</sup> Later, on ninth-century woodcarvings (plate 9) similar bosses form such a recurrent motif that one is tempted to attribute them to the same local tradition.<sup>19</sup>

One of the characteristic features of the Jerusalem mihrab is the continuous line formed by its archivolt, its architrave, and its upper frame. Real or blind niches, in which a continuous band outlines the arched section of the niche and sets it apart, occur again in ninth-century Egyptian and Mesopotamian art. The closest parallel is the mihrab of Ibn Tulun with its pair of moldings (plate 7) that follow the pointed and stilted arch, turn at right angles above the capitals, and then turn at right angles



Plate 8. Cairo. Coptic stela. From M. W. E. Crum, *Coptic Monuments*.

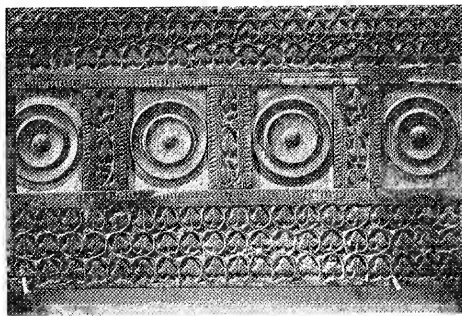


Plate 9. Egypt. Wooden panel with decorative bosses. (Photo: E. Baer; courtesy Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo.)



again to form the outer rectangular frame. A presumably Tulunid mihrab in the Great Mosque at Damascus,<sup>20</sup> and a tombstone with the design of a mihrab from the cemetery of 'Ayn Sirā dated 274 (887)<sup>21</sup> use a similar composition.

The lower part of the mihrab has two significant features. The first and more important are the capitals (plate 10). Formed out of concentric rings topped with a

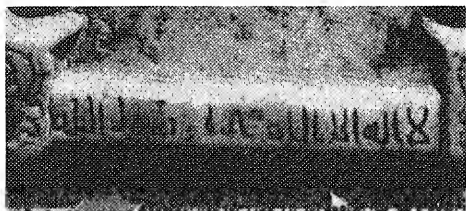


Plate 10. Jerusalem. Mihrab in the Cave of the Dome of the Rock (detail of plate 1).

pair of half-palmettes, they resemble the so-called bell- or clock-shaped capitals found in the mihrab of the throne-room mosque in the Jausaq al-Khaqani in Samarra<sup>22</sup> and on a late-eighth- or early-ninth-century tombstone in the Jami' al-'Umariyya in Mosul.<sup>23</sup> Even earlier examples of capitals with bulbous bodies can be found. The capitals on five of the wooden panels of the Aqsa Mosque (plate 6),<sup>24</sup> attributable to the middle or second half of the eighth century, are examples. Composed as they are of two symmetrically placed, facing acanthus leaves topped by additional volutes to support the architrave, these capitals still belong to the Byzantine tradition. As Georges Marçais correctly observed, they represent "a simplified deformation of the Corinthian capital" and serve neither as a parallel nor as an immediate prototype for the capitals of the Jerusalem mihrab. Capitals that closely resemble our Jerusalem examples seem to have been developed at a much later date, and probably do not appear before the Fatimid period. The earliest known dated example is a small, no longer extant mihrab of 393 (1003), which Creswell found on the roof of the al-Hakim mosque and assigned to that building.<sup>25</sup> Other extremely close parallels are found on a series of Fatimid wooden mihrabs from about the end of the tenth to the second half of the twelfth century (plates 11 and 12). The often twisted columns end with bulbous capitals and bases. Like the Jerusalem capitals they have concentric circles on their



Plate 11. Cairo. Wooden mihrab, Fatimid period. From J. David-Weill, *Les Bois à épigraphes jusqu'à l'époque mamoulouk*.

flattened surface and are topped by two or three leaves.<sup>26</sup>

I have suggested that the concentric circles and bosses on the upper section of the Jerusalem mihrab derive from funerary stelai and follow an Egyptian tradition going back at least to sixth- or seventh-century Coptic art. Somewhat later, seventh-to-eighth-century stelai often show another element that recurs on our mihrab, namely a rosette which, like the black disk, is centered between the colonnettes and below a horizontal architectural element. In one group, exemplified by a fragmentary stele in the Victoria and Albert Museum (plate 13)<sup>27</sup> and a group of stelai in Cairo,<sup>28</sup> the rosette



Plate 12. Cairo. Wooden mihrab, Fatimid period.  
From J. David-Weill, *Les Bois à épigraphes jusqu'à l'époque mamlouk*.

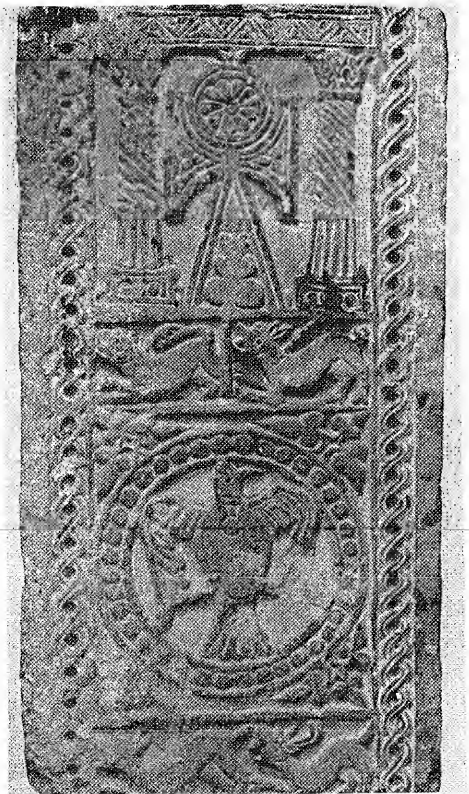


Plate 13. Coptic stela. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. From J. Beckwith, *Coptic Sculpture*.

occupies the circular top of an ankh (plate 14), in others it completely fills the space between the attached columns.<sup>29</sup> Often set into a large relief disk or the center of a roundel, most of the rosettes have a geometric simplicity remarkably like that of the rosette on the black disk in Jerusalem.

The resemblance between this black rosette of the Jerusalem mihrab and rosettes carved on Coptic gravestones certainly does not prove that the black stone belongs to the original work of the mihrab. There can be no doubt, however, that at least throughout the first centuries of the Islamic era rosettes were applied in blind niches and on Coptic stelai in much the same way. Carved between a pair of attached columns they appear, for instance, in two of the wooden panels of the Aqsa Mosque (plate 15)<sup>30</sup> and on several of the ninth-

century marble panels of the mihrab in the Great Mosque of Qayrawan, both of which hark back to the Coptic-Hellenistic tradition.

Creswell argued that the archaic Kufic character of the inscriptions suggests an Umayyad, late-seventh-century date for the whole mihrab. As for the shahada (plate 10), two details in my opinion postpone its proposed date by at least two hundred years. The first is the arched ligature that can clearly be seen between the letters *lam* and *ha* in the first and last word "Allah." A brief check of Umayyad and early Abbasid epigraphy indicates that up to the middle or second half of the



Plate 14. Cairo. Coptic stele. From M. W. E. Crum, *Coptic Monuments*.



Plate 15. Jerusalem, Aqsa Mosque. Wooden panel (W16). (Photo: E. Baer.)

ninth century horizontal ligatures do not descend below the line. The earliest examples I have found of that practice occur on Egyptian tombstones dated 243 (857)<sup>31</sup>—which thereby appear to provide a *terminus post quem* for this particular type of ligature—and it did not become common practice until the tenth or eleventh century.<sup>32</sup> The other data supporting a later date are the triangular, slightly bifurcated finials or “swallow tails” at the end of the hastae, which are still clearly visible in the second writing of “Allah.” In Egyptian and Palestinian epigraphy this feature, too, does not occur before the tenth century. Excellent parallels are provided in a number of mid-tenth-century epitaphs, such as a tombstone from 346 (957) and another fragmentary example dated 357 (968), both in the Department of Antiquities in Jerusalem.<sup>33</sup> Still more closely related to the style of the shahada is the inscription on a marble tombstone from 372 (983) (plate 16) now in the Aqsa Museum.<sup>34</sup> As in the case of the shahada, the letters appear to have been engraved rather than chiseled and worked with an instrument that was not appropriate for the purpose.

We do not know how often the mihrab was moved. According to the Egyptian architects responsible for the most recent restorations, the outer inscription was already mutilated when in the late fifties they embedded the mihrab in its present position. Its poor condition makes reading impossible, but the careless carving of some sections of the visible inscription seems to suggest that part of the inscription is not contemporary with the mihrab. Extreme caution must therefore be exercised in using the epigraphic style of this framing band as evidence for the mihrab’s date or origin. The less-mutilated sections of the inscription reveal two interesting details, however (plate 17). One is that the



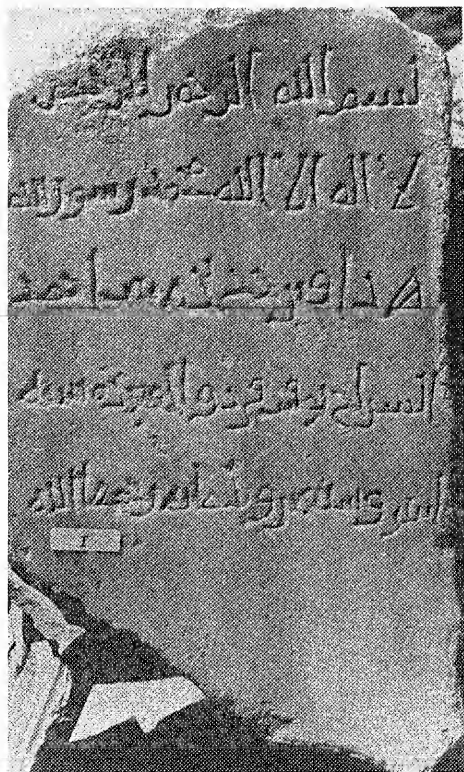


Plate 16. Jerusalem. Marble tombstone, dated 372 (983). Museum of the Aqsa Mosque. From *Levant* 11 (1979).

tails of some of the short letters are carried to the top of the inscription; letters like *ra*, *ya*, and *nun* at the end of the word display this curved-up tail. The other is that round or closed letters like *waw*, *mim*, *fa*, and *qaf* have a pear-shaped, slightly pointed head.

Epigraphic evidence for the appearance of these two features leads to the same group of tombstones from ninth-century Egypt mentioned earlier and to one particular artist—a certain al-Makki—who signed his name on two other marble tombstones. One of them was for a person who died on Jumada II 243 (September-October 857) and the other for someone who died on Sha'ban 243 (December 857).<sup>35</sup> Whether



Plate 17. Jerusalem. Mihrab in the Cave of the Dome of the Rock (detail of plate 1).

the rising tails of the letters, their pointed heads, and arched ligatures were invented by this artist is of course impossible to say, but his tombstones at least provide a *terminus post quem* for these epigraphic features in Egypt and Syria. They also imply that the inscription on the Jerusalem mihrab can hardly antedate the late ninth century, and if it is contemporary with the rest of the carving on the mihrab, it cannot be dated before the second half of the ninth, if not to the tenth, century. By that time, that is to say in the Ikshidid or early Fatimid period, these features had become much more common (plate 18).<sup>36</sup>

The characteristic details of the mihrab in the Cave of the Dome of the Rock suggest two conclusions. First, the date cannot be earlier than the second half of the ninth century, and features like the disk-shaped capitals

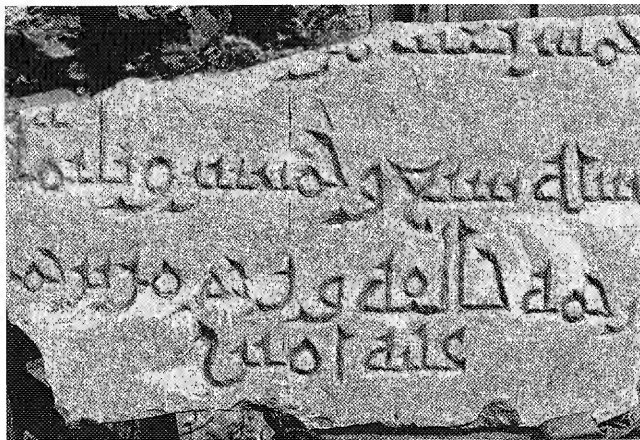


Plate 18. Tombstone fragment, dated 357 (968). (Photo: courtesy Department of Antiquities, Jerusalem.)

and the curiously stilted trefoil arch point even more securely to the tenth or eleventh century. Second, there can be little doubt about the Abbasid influence from the art of Mesopotamia on the artistic character of the mihrab, but at the same time other parallels point to artistic connections with Egypt. The latter become even more plausible when one considers that the mihrab belongs to the category of completely flat—as opposed to concave—prayer niches. Egyptian monuments from the Tulunid to the early Fatimid period give the impression that this form of mihrab was fashionable in the years under consideration. There are three extant flat Tulunid mihrabs—two in Cairo in the mosque of Ibn Tulun, and one in the Great Mosque in Damascus<sup>37</sup> and a series of Tulunid tombstones in the form of a flat niche in the Cairo Museum.<sup>38</sup> The Fatimid mihrab of al-Afdal in the mosque of Ibn Tulun is rendered in the form of a blind niche,<sup>39</sup> and numerous wooden mihrabs from the late tenth to the late eleventh century, which allegedly were found in Shi'a tombs at Fustat, also show this typical feature.<sup>40</sup>

Since we know so little about the circumstances under which the mihrab was installed, it would be presumptuous to attempt further to sharpen the proposed data. But one can say that if the mihrab was originally meant to serve as a prayer niche in the Cave of the Dome of the Rock, it had a *raison d'être* only

when the cave was actually used for this purpose, and no precise information as to when this custom was introduced is available. Throughout the first centuries prayers were almost certainly held in the Aqsa Mosque; the first mention of the cave as a gathering place for prayer comes from Ibn al-Faqih, who wrote it in 902-3.<sup>41</sup>

Second, it is possible that the actual sponsor of the mihrab was a member of the Ikshhidid or Fatimid dynasty. The Ikshhidids were not great patrons of art. We know next to nothing about their architectural activities outside Cairo, and not a single Ikshhidid monument is preserved. Yet these governors were pious Muslims and deeply devoted to Jerusalem. It was presumably the sanctity of that city which induced them to erect their family tomb outside the northeast corner of the Noble Sanctuary, at the site where in 350 (961-62) 'Ali ibn Ikshhid and Kafur had ordered restorations of the city wall.<sup>42</sup> As recently as the nineteenth century, the coffin of the deceased was carried in the funeral procession across the Haram area, making one station at the Aqsa Mosque and another at the Dome of the Rock.<sup>43</sup> This custom is probably very ancient, and the Ikshhidids possibly adhered to it; if so, the mihrab was no doubt intended for these or similar funerals held at the Noble Sanctuary.

As S. D. Goitein pointed out, these and other tenth-century burials in Jerusalem imply that at that time "a new turn in the concepts about the holy character of Jerusalem must have taken place, and the belief that it would be the scene of the Last Judgement and the gate to Paradise must have gained ground."<sup>44</sup> The custom of praying in the Cave of the Dome of the Rock dates from the beginning of the same century. This, along with other evidence, helps to confirm our stylistic analysis and to strengthen the proposed tenth-to-eleventh-century date for the mihrab.

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#### NOTES

1. K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture* [hereafter cited as *EMA*], 2 vols. rev., vol. 1 (1979), pt. 1, p. 100 and fig. 374; pt. 2, pl. 120a.
2. At a visit to the Cairo office of the architect S. Shawarbi and his assistants, I was also assured that the back of the mihrab, which is now embedded in the wall, was completely plain and, contrary to what a colleague had told me, bore no inscription.
3. Janine Sourdel-Thomine and Bertold Spuler, eds., *Kunst des Islam* (Propyläen Kunstgeschichte, vol. 4) (Berlin, 1973), p. 145 and fig. 22.
4. For a discussion of this dirhem, see George C. Miles, "Mihrab and 'Anazal: A Study in Early Islamic Iconography," in *Archaeologia Orientalia in Memoriam Ernst Herzfeld*, ed. G. C. Miles (New York, 1952), pp. 156-71.
5. Géza Fehérvári, "The Origin of the Mihrab and Its Development down to the Fourteenth Century," Ph. d. diss., School of African and Oriental Studies, London University, 1960. I have since discussed the dating of the Jerusalem mihrab with him, and he continues to regard it as contemporary with the Dome of the Rock. See also idem, "Tombstone or Mihrab, a Speculation," in Richard Ettinghausen, ed., *Islamic Art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 1973); *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2d ed. (henceforth *EF*) s.v. "Mihrab."
6. The dimensions are given as 1.37 m × 0.76 m in Creswell's publication. The 0.7 m difference in height is presumably the result of the restoration, which embedded a larger section of the base in the ground.
7. Creswell apparently ignored this disk as being a later addition.
8. In the summer of 1980 Fehérvári referred to an unpublished mihrab which closely resembles this one. He will publish it in a forthcoming article.
9. F. Sarre and Ernst Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise im Euphrat und Tigris Gebiet*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1920), pp. 285-86, fig. 275 and pl. 135, right. Also mentioned by Fehérvári, "Two Early Mihrābs outside Shirāz," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 1 (1969): 4, fig. 10.
10. Creswell, *EMA*, 2:361 and fig. 258, pl. 116c, dated by Creswell A.D. 878-82. The walls of the Baghdad Gate at Raqqa (ibid., pl. 2e) are attributed by Creswell to 155 (772), that is to say nearly a century earlier, to the reign of al-Mansur; Herzfeld attributed this gate to Harun al-Rashid and the early years of the ninth century (Creswell, *EMA*, p. 45).
11. Gaston Wiet, *Stèles funéraires*, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1936), p. 79, no. 554; pl. 24, 10938.
12. Creswell, *Muslim Architecture of Egypt* [hereafter cited as *MAE*] (New York, 1978), 1:199 and pl. 72c, d.
13. Creswell, *EMA*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 100 and fig. 35.
14. Panels EI; E6; E9; cf. R. W. Hamilton, *The Structural History of the Aqsa Mosque* (Jerusalem-London, 1949), pls. 50; 54; 57. Creswell, *EMA*, vol. 2, pl. 25 a, f, i (the reproductions are unfortunately of poor quality). Similar scroll decorations on arches occur in Byzantine art, and particularly in Coptic art they remained common for centuries. See, for instance, M. W. E. Crum, *Coptic Monuments* (Cairo, 1902), pl. 32; J. Beckwith, *Coptic Sculpture, 300-1300* (London, 1963), pl. 125.
15. Presumably contemporary with the original building, dated 263-65 (876-79). Cf. Creswell, *EMA*, vol. 2, pl. 106 b, to right of dikka, above the supplementary mihrab (M2). For another parallel in the decoration of Samarra, see Ernst Herzfeld, *Der Wandschmuck der Bauten von Samarra und seine Ornamentik* (Die Ausgrabungen von Samarra, vol. 1) (Berlin, 1923), pl. 42.
16. Wiet, *Stèles funéraires*, vol. 2, no. 2721/37, pl. 25; cf. ibid., pl. 39. For a similar design on the architrave of a tenth-century wooden, early Fatimid mihrab, see J. David-Weill, *Les Bois à épigraphes jusqu'à l'époque mamoulouk* (Cairo, 1931), pp. 72-73 and pl. 10 (also on cover).
17. Frequently reproduced; see, for instance, Creswell, *EMA*, 2:348-49 and pl. 122. For a better reproduction, see Sourdel-Thomine and Spuler, *Kunst des Islam*, no. 131. The rest of this mihrab is attributed to Lajin who in 1296 executed a number of works in this mosque.
18. See, for instance, sixth- and seventh-century stelai from Erment, Upper Egypt, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, nos. 08.246 and 18.5.5, published by M. Cramer in *Archäologische und Epigraphische Klassifikation koptischer Denkmäler* (Wiesbaden, 1957), p. 15 and pl. 16, figs. 28-29. For a series of stelai with similar decoration, see Crum, *Coptic Monuments*, pls. 9, 8444; 10, 8453; 2, 8414, and many more.
19. Cairo, Museum of Islamic Art, no. 11594. See also woodcarvings from Fustat, published by Edmund Pauty, *Les Bois sculptés jusqu'à l'époque ayyoubide* (Cairo, 1931), pl. 7, no. 4626; pl. 8, no. 4625 (both of unknown origin); pl. 9, no. 6858/1; pl. 10, no. 2297; 2296; 4714; 2300 (all from Fustat).
20. Creswell, *EMA*, 2:356 and n. 2.
21. Wiet, *Stèles funéraires*, 4:26, no. 1260 and pl. 8, erected for a certain Fadl ibn 'Abbas. The form of this arch differs from the previous examples, however, in that the inner outline is pointed and horseshoe shaped; the outer one is scalloped. For a Mesopotamian example, unfortunately also only partly preserved, see Herzfeld, *Wandschmuck*, pl. 62. The extension of the archivolt as architrave is fairly common in Syrian architecture. Early examples are the probably eighth-century wooden beams with arched decoration from the Aqsa Mosque. In none of the examples, however, do we find an upper frame (for these panels, see above, n. 14).
22. Creswell, *EMA*, 2:243, fig. 191 and pl. 57 b. Cf. Herzfeld, *Wandschmuck*, pl. 62, for stucco decoration.
23. Sarre and Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise*, 2:283-85, fig. 274. This tombstone shares two other elements with the Jerusalem mihrab: the inscribed tie beam and the archivolt extended into the upper frame.

24. R. W. Hamilton, *Structural History of the Aqsa Mosque*, pl. 63, 57, 50; cf. Georges Marçais, "The Panels of Carved Wood in the Aqsa Mosque at Jerusalem," in Creswell, *EMA*, 2:128-29 and fig. 127.
25. Creswell, *MAE*, 1:83 and pl. 115 a.
26. David-Weill, *Bois à épigraphes*, pl. 10, nos. 4802, 8937, 4801, 8464, and pp. 56-57, said to have been found in Fustat; cf. Aly Bey Bahgat and A. Gabriel, *Fouilles d'al-Foustat* (Cairo, 1921), pl. 26. For another eleventh-century wooden panel in the shape of an arched mihrab, see *Exhibition of Islamic Art in Egypt, 1969-1971*, April, 1969, Ministry of Culture U.A.R. 1969, no. 210 and pl. 37 (Cairo, Museum of Islamic Art, no. 14445, also found in Fustat). For similar capitals in Coptic art, cf. wooden screen of Abu Saifain, in Edmund Pauty, *Bois sculptés des églises coptes (époque fatimide)* (Cairo, 1930), pp. 34-35, pls. 34 and 35, 1. Two tombstones with a flat mihrab found by Herzfeld in the tomb chamber of the Shaykh Fathi Mosque in Mosul represent a Mesopotamian parallel to this development. The tombstones are undated, but Herzfeld's attribution to c. 1087-92 seems to accord with the style of the Kufic inscriptions. See Sarre and Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise*, 2:280-82, figs. 272-73. The supporting leaves of these capitals are much longer than those on the Jerusalem mihrab.
27. Beckwith, *Coptic Sculpture*, pp. 29; 56, no. 130, pl. 130, from Erment, Upper Egypt, seventh-eighth century.
28. Crum, *Coptic Monuments*, pl. 35, no. 8600.
29. Ibid., pl. 35, no. 8599, from Damanhour. See also Craner, *Archäologische und Epigraphische Klassifikation*, pl. 1, fig. 1; Metropolitan Museum of Art, no. 10.176.28, said to be from Kuft, c. eighth century.
30. Cf. Marçais, "Panels of Carved Wood in the Aqsa Mosque," n. 25.
31. Wiet, *Stèles funéraires*, vol. 2, no. 469 and pl. 12; no. 1271; cf. ibid. no. 462, pl. 10. For the Samarra mihrab, see Creswell, *EMA*, vol. 2, pl. 121 d.
32. See, for instance, S. Flury, *Islamische Schriftbänder Amida-Diarbaki XI. Jahrhundert* (Basel, 1920), pl. 1a. See also idem, "Samarra und die Ornamentik des Ibn Tulun," *Der Islam* 4 (1913): 426, fig. 2, for the early Fatimid period.
33. For the development of the decorative apex in Kufic epigraphy, see for instance A. Grohmann, "The Origin and Early Development of Floriated Kufic," *Ars Orientalis* 2 (1957): 183-213. My particular thanks to Dr. Moshe Sharon who drew my attention to the Jerusalem tombstones and kindly lent me his photographs.
34. Reproduced in *Levant* 11 (1979), no. 7, pl. 14 B, and p. 115 (Museum number 83).
35. Wiet, *Stèles funéraires*, 2:32, pl. 10, no. 462; and ibid., pp. 35-36, pl. 12, no. 1271. For other examples, see ibid., p. 65, no. 526, pl. 19, 9541, dated 244 (858-59), and p. 155, no. 8353, pl. 42, dated 249 (863).
36. Dated 357 (968), Jerusalem, Department of Antiquities, no. M 97. For Fatimid examples, see, for instance, the catalogue, *The Arts of Islam* (London, 1976), no. 478, the border of a tenth-century marble cenotaph. According to Flury, a tendency to carry the short letters up to the top of the inscription band is evident toward the end of the tenth century in various Muhammadan districts.
37. Creswell, *EMA*, 2:349 and pl. 123.
38. Wiet, *Stèles funéraires*, pl. 26, no. 2953; pl. 35, no. 8589; pl. 30, no. 33380/3; 9129; pl. 43, no. 8093.
39. Creswell, *MAE*, vol. 1, pl. 77; 116 b.
40. David-Weill, *Bois à épigraphes*, pl. 10; *Exhibition of Islamic Art in Egypt*, 1969, no. 210, pl. 221 and fig. 37.
41. Ibn al-Faqih, *Kutāb al-Buldān*, in *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum* 5 (Leiden, 1885), p. 100; cf. A. S. Marmardji, *Textes géographiques arabes sur la Palestine* (Paris, 1951), p. 211; in *ET*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. "Ibn al-Faqih," article by H. Massé.
42. Max van Berchem, *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum*, pt. 2, *Syrie du Sud: Jerusalem* vol. 2 *Haram* (Cairo, 1925, 1927), no. 146 and pp. 11-15. The inscription is badly eroded.
43. Ibid., p. 14, n. 5.
44. *EP*, s.v. "al-Ḳuds."